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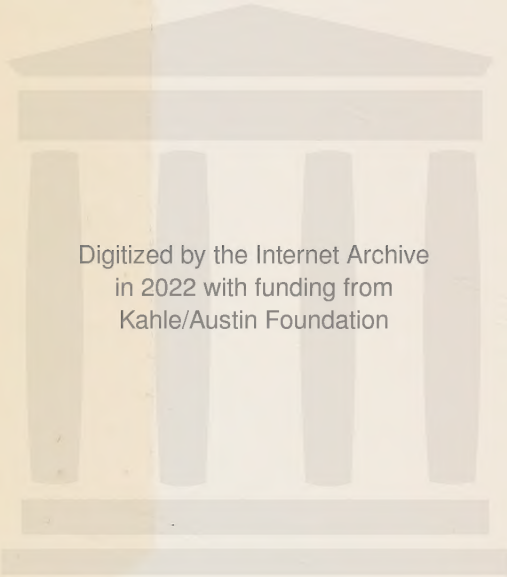


**Grow
Toward
LEADERSHIP**

**Developing Tomorrow's
Leadership Today**

Melvin L. Hodges

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GROW TOWARD LEADERSHIP

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by

MELVIN L. HODGES

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What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may win Christ, and be found in him . . . that I may know him. . . . Not as though I had already attained . . . but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. . . . But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark . . . of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

—PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

Chapter 1

THE GOAL OF GROWTH

"I press toward the mark."

THIS REMARKABLE PASSAGE allows us a glimpse into the inner life of the Apostle Paul. The true measure of a man may be ascertained by determining his goal in life. Thus the growth of our Christian life and ministry hinges largely on the objectives that we have before us and the measure of faith and discipline which we employ to reach them.

It is evident that Paul was more concerned about his personal growth as a Christian than in his growth as a minister. Phrases such as "that I may win Christ," "and be found in him" and "that I may know him" stand out in this passage. Ministry is not directly mentioned, but the thought pervades the passage. Paul did not consider his ministry as separated from his Christian life. Instead, his ministry was the natural outgrowth of his relationship to Christ. So, when talking about attaining the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, which would include both his Christian life and his ministry, he manifested an overpowering urgency to *know* Christ. This is as it should be since the problem of growth in ministry is primarily one of spiritual growth in the minister's own life. Our No.

1 problem is not without but within. There is a natural tendency to blame unfavorable circumstances, the wrong attitude of our associates, or the lack of spiritual life in our people as the cause of our failure to advance in our ministry. How difficult it is to be strictly honest with ourselves! We tend to dream of greener pastures and to imagine what we might do for God if we were in more favorable circumstances. But we close our eyes to the fact that the real cause for our lack of success is within us. When we come to "know Christ" as He intends for us to know Him, our ministry will be all that He intends it to be.

What do we mean by growth, success and advancing in ministry? We must be sure that we have the right goal before us. We dare not measure spiritual success by worldly standards. What is a successful ministry? In other vocations, the success of a man is usually measured in terms of the visible results which he is able to produce, the esteem in which he is held by his colleagues, the salary which his services are able to command. In spiritual ministry, we dare not apply the usual formula. It is not what my colleagues think of me that counts, but what does God think of me? Nor is it a question of how large a salary I can command; rather, how much am I contributing to the kingdom of God? We dare not determine our success by comparing the number in our congregation or Sunday school with the number in a neighboring church. Basically and ultimately, there is only one criterion of success: Am I fulfilling the will of God in my life? The will of God at times may lead us to minister to five

thousand, as Christ did on more than one occasion. But it may also mean leaving the multitudes to journey on foot to one Samaritan woman. At times it may bring the crowds around us who will shout, "Hosanna in the highest!" And at other times the fulfilling of God's will may mean to struggle alone in a dark Gethsemane. Nothing is important except to attain our true spiritual objectives. "I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Nothing is important except the will of God, whether it be the triumphal entry into Jerusalem or the Via Dolorosa to Calvary. Neither crowds, nor salary, nor the applause of people, nor visible results are to be the measure of my success. The only measure of success which I shall recognize is "that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." If I am to attain the goal of true ministry, I must attain true fellowship with Christ. I must be a man of vision with a goal before me, a man of faith, and a man of a single, holy purpose, pressing "toward the mark for the prize." To fulfill the will of God will be the one consuming passion of my soul, and all else will be counted as refuse, cast aside and forgotten, as I press forward to fulfill the perfect will of God for my life.

Chapter 2

THE POSSIBILITY OF GROWTH

ONE OF THE TRAGEDIES of the Christian ministry is that so many of us are spiritual dwarfs when God has intended for us to be spiritual giants. Somewhere along the line we failed to grow. So many make an encouraging beginning and for a time show remarkable development, both in spiritual life and ministerial ability, only to level off after a time. The causes may be many, but not the least will be the lack of vision. Perhaps the minister will decide that he has placed his sights too high. He views his own ministry and compares it with those of his colleagues and decides to settle for the attainable and to no longer reach for the stars.

Paul declared, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after." The declaration is the more remarkable when we realize that the one speaking was not the young man, Paul the enthusiast, at the beginning of his ministry, but Paul the aged. This is the man who had raised up churches, wrought miracles, laid his hands on believers and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, blazed the missionary trail through Asia Minor and Europe. He had seen visions, written

epistles and been stoned, beaten and imprisoned. Even as he penned these words, he was a prisoner cut off from his active ministry and from contact with the churches which he loved so much. Surely if anyone could have said that he had attained, it would have been Paul. Surely if any minister had a right to settle down and decide that he had done his part and reached his zenith, it would be he. But even in the midst of such unfavorable circumstances, he flings out the challenge "I follow after. . . . I press toward the mark." Yet we, who have not attained a hundredth part of what he attained; we, whose ministry cannot be compared to that of the great apostle, find ourselves coasting along and settling into our own particular groove, in effect saying, "I have attained. There is really nothing more ahead for me."

God has an unfolding plan for every life. Even if we attained for today God's purpose for us, so that we could say with confidence, "I have fully done the will of God," yet the challenge of an unknown tomorrow and God's unfolding purpose for us presents the possibility of further growth and adventure in God.

Never can we reach the place where we say, "I am already perfect; I know it all!" On one occasion I was waiting in the presence of God when I thought of the question Can I rightfully expect any more? I have preached sermons; I have pastored churches; I have taught younger ministers; I have pioneered new fields; I have seen revivals in some measure; I have filled some limited areas of responsibility in the work of God. Can I expect anything new? Will

not my future ministry be simply a repetition of some phase of ministry already experienced? When I pondered this thought, the answer came, partly as a rebuke, and partly as an inspiration. Is there any limit in God? Can we exhaust the possibilities of knowing God? Can we exhaust the operation of redemption? The gospel is a manifestation of God Himself in the redemption of humanity. In this gospel ministry we are partners and colaborers with God. Therefore, the possibilities for growth and expansion in this ministry are as limitless as God Himself. Even though we know the Word of God chapter by chapter, verse by verse; even though we are familiar with all the interpretation of difficult doctrinal points, yet the working out of these marvelous truths, in love and faith in our own life and ministry, would require not one life but a thousand lives. And we would still not have exhausted the possibilities. Each new day is a new challenge; each new problem, a chance to put God to the test. Each new field of service is an adventure by faith into the potentialities of partnership with the living God. The limits are in ourselves, in our weak faith, in our small vision, but not in God. The possibilities of our growth are not limited from the divine side; the limits are in our feebleness of apprehension, courage and faith.

A woman always desired to see the ocean. The years passed, and the opportunity was denied her, until one day her grandchildren said, "Let us take Grandmother to the ocean." The plans were laid, and finally the day came when she stood on the shore of the mighty ocean. She gazed at the im-

mense expanse of water for some moments, until one of her grandchildren said, "Well, Grandmother, what do you think of it?" She turned to her grandchild, and with a trace of disappointment in her voice, said, "Is this all?"

We would say, "But, Grandmother, you do not understand what you are seeing. The ocean reaches far beyond your comprehension. What you see is but the beginning. This ocean touches the frozen lands of the north and the tropical islands of the south. There are depths here never explored by man. This ocean is great and mighty beyond the capacity of our minds to comprehend."

Paul speaks of knowing the love of Christ which passes knowledge. So it is with our experience in God. I say that I know God, but what I really mean is that I am acquainted only with those small areas where my own life has been brought into contact with God. I have stood at the shore of this mighty sea and experienced the benefits of the cleansing wave. The healing stream has flowed over me and I have been made whole. The power has touched my life in the infilling of the Spirit. I have shared with Him in a measure His ministry of redemption. All this I know in much the same sense that this woman looked upon the ocean. But out beyond for my life and ministry are the great expanses of the ocean of God's love, knowledge and power. He is calling for me to know Him. He is challenging me to grow and to share with Him the yet unexplored areas of His person and the ministry of His redemption. What possibilities of growth are before me! I will not settle down at this point along the shore,

but I will follow after and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Chapter 3

THE NECESSITY FOR GROWTH

THE PURPOSE OF BIRTH is maturity. Babies are born, not to remain babies but to develop into adults. Lack of development causes concern and disappointment. So in the spiritual world growth is the law of God's kingdom. We must grow in order not to disappoint the expectation of God. God has looked our way; He has called us. As truly as He looked upon the humble fishermen on the shores of Galilee and called them to follow Him, with the promise that He would *make them to become* fishers of men, so He has looked upon us and called us, not for what we now are, but for that which we shall become.

The Apostle Paul said, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The word "apprehend" literally means to capture or take prisoner. Paul saw himself as a fugitive from God. On the Damascus road, God captured him. He captured him with a purpose in mind. Speaking to Ananias concerning Paul, Christ said, "For he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name" (Acts 9:15). Paul himself reported the interview with Christ on the Damascus

road where he said that Jesus spoke to him: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness" (Acts 26:16). Paul was called to know Christ and to serve Him. Looking back at that Damascus scene, he measured his spiritual life and ministry against the vision received at the time of his calling and cried, "I am pressing on to see if I can capture it, the ideal for which I was captured by Christ Jesus" (v. 12, Williams). One of the Spanish translations puts it this way: "But I follow after, if that I may lay my hand upon that for which Christ Jesus laid his hand on me."

This truth applies not only to Paul but to us also. The question is, For what purpose did Christ lay hold of us? When He saved us and called us to His ministry, what did He have in mind? More than I have attained at the present time? Yes, so much more that only He knows the answer. His Spirit stirs unutterable longings within us. We glimpse the possibilities in God—to love as He loved, to believe God as He believed God, to minister redemption to people as He ministered to them, unbound by the shackles of carnal limitations. We see these things and we know that it is the Spirit's call to us. But at the same time, we see the cross and the price that must be paid. We may shrink back and say that it is not for such as we. In a world of mediocrity, we feel half ashamed to confess that Christ is calling us to something beyond average attainment. Above all, we feel we must avoid that tag of being "superspiritual," or "fanatical." Certainly we want no false growth. Certainly the Holy Spirit is not

calling us to be lopsided or fanatical. He is calling us into full-orbed Christianity—to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—to attain the perfect will of God in our lives. God will be satisfied with nothing less. I am not talking about ultimate perfection when I ask the question How many of us are attaining 100 percent of our possibilities in God? What would God have us be today? Are we satisfied with 50 percent production? Seventy-five percent? Ninety percent? God grant that we may not be satisfied with anything less than 100 percent realization of God's will for us. I must have this growth if I am not to become stunted, dwarfed—a pygmy in God. I must grow or I will disappoint my Father who has planned so much for me.

Then the *work of God* requires our growth. The church is to be built, the kingdom of God extended in the earth. The work of God requires capable evangelists who will be able to stir the multitudes, gifted pastors and teachers who will guide the flock of God. Have we ever thought about what the Apostle Paul would do if he were in our town or church? Would he be content with the spiritual progress which is being made? But we say, "I am not the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul is not here." No, he is not here and he never will be. However, we are here. Do we have God's call upon our life? The Holy Spirit is our Helper as much as He was Paul's; at least, He wants to be.

What kind of a church does God want in our city? What would God do with our congregation if He could find an instrument that He could completely use as He would desire? What would be the

spiritual tone of the church? How many members would it have? No one can answer these questions, but all of us would doubtless say that God is longing and ready to do much more for all of us than is being done. Here is the crux of the matter—we must grow in our ministry in order that God's work may be done.

It has been my lot on the mission field to teach national pastors. Many times they have been men without adequate preparation, only a few years removed from a life of superstition and degradation. They have been regenerated, filled with God's Spirit and called to the ministry. I have addressed these men, so inadequate from any human point of view, and pointed out the great task that was before them in their country—the towns to be evangelized, the opposition to be overcome, the churches that were to be built. I have tried to give them a glimpse of what God would do for their country. Then I have said to them: "Ministers will not come from the United States to do this work. They will not come from Europe or from some neighboring Latin American country. If this work is to be done, you brethren, called of God and endued by the Spirit, are the ones that will do it. If this country is to have churches with five hundred members, it will be because you brethren grow so that you can become pastors of churches with five hundred members. There are evangelists among you; there are teachers and pastors here. We cannot measure the possibilities of each life. But you must grow spiritually and develop your ministry. God is depending on you as

certainly as He depended on the disciples that He left with the task of world evangelism."

What is true for them is true for all of us. God's work today demands men of spiritual stature. The challenge is ours. Let us not pray for a smaller task, but for spiritual growth to meet a task that is too big for us.

Chapter 4

METHOD OF GROWTH

GROWTH IS NOT AN ACCIDENT. Neither is growth accomplished instantaneously; it is a process. It is true that spiritually we pass through certain experiences which illuminate our understanding and bring us a new knowledge of Christ. From one day to another we may find ourselves on a new plane of spiritual understanding. This new illumination may be brought about by a new infilling of the Holy Spirit, an experience in the healing of our bodies, some definite answer to prayer, or some dealing of God in our life. They are in part the result of growth in God and also provide an element for future growth, but these experiences in themselves are not growth. Growth depends upon what we do with such experiences. There are individuals who have received marvelous experiences of illumination, who have not profited by these experiences. Growth is a process and growth requires time.

Even so, time is not the all-important factor. It is what is happening in us during the passing of time that counts. We should remember that the same period of time that turns a sapling into a strong, robust tree will see the heart eaten out of another tree. The passage of time to one means development, to the other deterioration and death.

Time is important to growth. Someone has said that it takes twenty years to make a sermon because it takes twenty years to develop the man. Some younger ministers feel that all they lack for the development of a successful ministry is time. "I am young and inexperienced now," they say, "but wait until a few years have gone by. I shall attain success." But time alone will not do it. What are the forces at work within us? Growth or decay? That is what is important. In no realm is it truer than in the ministry: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Three important components make up man's personality: power to reason, power to feel, and power to determine—or, the intellect, the emotions, and the will. Of these three, it is the will that sits as king on the throne. Intellect is important, but most of us know more in our minds than what we show by our actions. A brilliant intellect is no guarantee of spiritual development. All of us are acquainted with persons of brilliant mind who have an intellectual grasp of Christian truth but whose lives fail to demonstrate that truth. Nor are the emotions the determining factor. Many persons have mistakenly judged their spiritual attainments by their emotions. Some who have had great emotional experiences have not developed a stable Christian character. Emotions are a necessary part of personality, and emotional feeling has an important role to fill in Christian experience. God Himself displays emotion. But emotion is not the key to spiritual growth.

This brings us to the will. The importance of the will is shown by the fact that one's will must re-

spond to Christ in order for that person to obtain salvation. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). If the will decides against Christ, there is no room for grace and faith to operate. This does not annul the place of God's grace in salvation, but God has so constituted man that the will is sovereign on the human throne. That God in grace can influence the will is not disputed. The exercise of the will is the highest prerogative of which man is capable. Just as Christ can come to us only as we accept Him, so in all of our subsequent spiritual growth the will must be aligned on God's side. The will must be surrendered to God so that the Holy Spirit can produce spiritual growth. Paul explains it this way: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth [makes decisions that result in actions] to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:6-8).

Our Christian life and ministry today are the harvest of yesterday's sowing. Our ministry tomorrow will be the product of today's seed. Therefore, if I am to have a spiritual ministry tomorrow, I must today sow the seed that will produce such a ministry. If today I sow carelessness, indifference, mistrust, doubt, envy, pride, selfishness, carnal ambition and love of ease, the results will show up in tomorrow's harvest. If on the other hand, I sow love, faith, hope, spiritual discipline, consecration, and strive to please God, most certainly tomorrow's harvest will show the result in spiritual growth both in personal life and in ministry.

Let us remember again that our public ministry can never in reality grow beyond the development of our own spiritual life. Let us be sure not to confuse apparent public success with spiritual growth. A young man started in the ministry with everything seemingly in his favor. Because he possessed a pleasing personality, had a good public delivery, and preached a dynamic message, very soon he was in demand far and wide. He was called to minister as evangelist in large churches and soon had openings beyond the borders of his own state. His climb toward success was sensational. But evidently the growth of his own spiritual life did not keep pace. Perhaps he depended too much on his own ability. Perhaps success came too easily to him and he felt no compelling necessity to strengthen the roots of his life in God. I do not know what took place behind the scenes in the area of his personal life, but suddenly his ministry collapsed. He left the ministry and he left the church. He had enjoyed success but he had not experienced spiritual growth. Eventually the true spiritual success of our ministry will seek the level of our spiritual experience with Christ. The only sure way of developing our ministry is by developing our spiritual life. Paul saw this and he cried out, "That I may know him."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, writing of his beloved France after its defeat at the hands of Hitler's armies, said in *Flight to Arras*: "Victory . . . Defeat . . . Terms I do not know what to make of. One victory exalts, another corrupts. One defeat kills, another brings life. *Tell me what seed* is lodged in your victory or defeat, and I will tell you its future. . . .

There is but one victory that I know is sure, and that is lodged in the energy of the seed." This is true not only of a nation such as France but also of our ministry. No victory in itself is final and complete; no defeat is absolute. What is our attitude in victory or defeat? What seed are we sowing? That is what counts.

A pastor has had trouble with his congregation. Mistakes have been made. He has been unable to maintain the harmony with his congregation, and so it is decided that a new pastor must fill the pulpit. So the minister leaves his pastorate in defeat. What will his attitude be? Will he become hard and bitter? Will he blame everyone else for his defeat? Will he accuse the officials of having shown partiality? Will he become resentful and hard? If so, in his defeat he is sowing the seeds for future failure. On the other hand, he may recognize that he is at least partially to blame for the difficulty. He may seek God for forgiveness for himself and for his people. He may allow his heart to be broken because of the difficulty which has come to the church of God. He may be determined to rectify his mistakes and ask God for wisdom to avoid similar errors in the future. If this is so, his defeat may be a step to his life's crowning victory.

Take another picture. An evangelist has enjoyed success and is acclaimed throughout the land; his services are in great demand. But again, what seed will he sow in his success? Will he become arrogant and self-sufficient? Will he fall victim to the lure of money? Will he consider that he has outgrown his brethren? Will he listen to the subtle lies of

Satan: "Now you are a success! You are going to be famous! You are making a name for yourself!" Or will he have the spiritual insight to realize that everything that has been achieved is through the grace of God? Will he seek to hide himself behind the cross and refuse to touch the glory? Will he remain as dependent upon God after five years of successful ministry as he was the first time he stepped into a pulpit? Our future ministry depends on the kind of seed we sow. There is no escape from the law of sowing and reaping.

Chapter 5

GROWTH THROUGH RECEPTIVITY

WHEN JESUS WANTED to teach one of the basic principles of spiritual life and growth, He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, *how* they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. 6:28-29). How do lilies grow? For one thing, they grow in a carefree manner, without anxiety, "they toil not, neither do they spin." They grow by receptivity, receiving from the elements around them the essentials to their growth. They receive from the soil; they drink in the moisture; they receive from the sun; they grow.

The Christian life is a two-way street of giving and receiving. We give ourselves to God. We surrender; we consecrate; we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then we open our hearts to that which God pours in. We give by consecration and submission to God. We receive by grace through faith. He who learns these two essentials will have mastered the fundamentals of spiritual growth.

We find this truth emphasized throughout the Bible. To receive, we must begin where God begins

and that is by recognizing our need. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). The hungry and thirsty are those who have not. It is an acknowledgment of weakness and insufficiency. Isaiah spoke of the youths fainting and falling. The youths represent the best in human strength and ability. Here is again the acknowledgment of human weakness and surrendering the same to God. "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew [change] their strength" (Isa. 40:31). "Wait" here means to hope, to trust expectantly

In John 15, in the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus emphasizes the same note: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. . . . Without me ye can do nothing. . . . If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (vv. 4-7). Here it is again. I surrender my need, my nothingness, to God. I abide hopefully, in faith, in receptivity in Christ. As I abide looking to Him as the source, knowing that without Him I can do nothing, the fruit is produced.

Paul learned this lesson well. He learned it through "a thorn in the flesh" (II Cor. 12:7). He speaks of his weakness, his nothingness, infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, but he said that he heard the Lord saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. . . . Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak,

then am I strong" (vv. 9-10). He had learned to receive strength in weakness, power in affliction. He had learned receptivity.

The secret of growth is to learn to draw upon God's inexhaustible supply, day by day, moment by moment, as the need and the occasion arise. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews urges us to "labour . . . to enter into that rest" (4:11). There is rest in receptivity, but there is also a laboring to enter into that rest. This is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life.

Chapter 6

GROWTH THROUGH CONFLICT

1. *The Battle for the Flesh*

WE HAVE DEALT with growth through receptivity, emphasizing the fact that we must simply surrender our inability to God and receive by grace through faith from His bountiful supply. Without diminishing in the least from the beauty of that truth, we must look at another aspect of our growth in grace. Here we find one of those deep, perplexing paradoxes of the Christian life. We labor and we rest. All is of grace, but we are in a conflict that requires the very best effort there is in us. Paul spoke about “*reaching* forth unto those things which are before, *I press* toward the mark.” Again the Christian life is compared to a conflict and the Christian is called a soldier. Without trying to explain this paradox, let us simply accept the fact that they represent two aspects of the Christian life, both of which are essential to our growth in grace and ministry. One cannot read such words as Paul wrote without realizing that there is opposition to our Christian advance; there are obstacles which must be overcome. The Christian life is a battlefield, and especially is this true of the ministry.

In a previous chapter, we have seen that in order for God to accomplish His work for His church and the kingdom, He must find instruments. We saw that the success of the kingdom of God depends on the calling of chosen workmen, and on their growth and development, so that they will fulfill the purpose of God. Ministers are God's key men in the advancement of the kingdom. In other words, we are in the ministry because God has called us for a special purpose. If God is successful in securing our cooperation, He can forge us into instruments of blessing for the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the enemy of the kingdom of God must doubtless realize that the ministry is a strategic area. If he can defeat God's purposes in the lives of His ministers, he will have struck a vital blow against the purposes of God in the earth. Therefore, it is not too much to say that the life of the minister becomes a battleground in which the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil struggle to gain total control. How important it is, then, that we give our complete cooperation to God. For this battle is not for the control of an inert passive area, but rather for the control of the human will, which is the master key to the entire person. Let us examine three areas of this conflict—the flesh, the mind and the spirit.

In the battle for the domination of our lives, the battle for the control of the physical body is one of the most common and more easily understood phases of the spiritual conflict. The word "flesh" is used here in its simplest and most literal meaning. I do not necessarily refer to it in the theological sense in which the flesh is sometimes spoken of as identical

with the carnal nature. I am referring rather to the physical body which God created and pronounced good in the beginning, the body which, due to the fall of man, has come under the control of sin but which, redeemed through Christ, can serve God in sanctification and honor. There are two special dangers from the side of the physical body, which must be guarded against if we are to attain spiritual growth.

The first is love of ease. Perhaps it could better and more plainly be called laziness. This also might be called lack of diligence. It has to do with a lack of personal discipline. We follow the course of least resistance, and the body becomes our master instead of our servant. Physical weariness becomes sufficient excuse to relieve us of spiritual responsibility. When we fall victim to this attack, we are likely to do the things that appeal to us and leave the unpleasant tasks undone.

Lack of diligence may express itself in a dozen ways—carelessness about personal appearance (There are authentic cases where pastors failed to enter a wider and more fruitful ministry because of this point. A word to the wise is sufficient!); an indulgence in pleasant pastimes, such as visiting and chatting with friends instead of dedicating time to prayer and study; giving time to entertaining reading, television, sports, etc., beyond the point of simple recreation and to the extent that it becomes an escape from the more serious call of the Christian ministry.

I have frequently heard pastors complain that they have not sufficient time to study or to read

books. My words are not equally applicable to all, for some pastors are working far more strenuously than the preservation of their health warrants. There are pastors who early and late are diligently occupied in promoting the kingdom of God. To such, rather than to stimulate them to greater effort, I would prefer to suggest in the words of Jesus to His disciples, "Come ye apart and rest awhile." However, it must be admitted that most of us waste a lot of time in the course of a day. Many pastors are not as diligent in the work of the ministry as are the members of their congregation, who report for work at 8 A.M. and are on the job until 5 P.M. The minister has no overseer to chide him for wasting time. Consequently, it is easy to find oneself involved in a multitude of minor details in the course of his day's work, such as household chores, visiting with the neighbors, perusing pleasant reading rather than setting oneself to the harder study that is waiting. The hours may slip by and we may find ourselves quite unprepared for the spiritual tasks that are ours. These are tendencies that must be corrected if we are to grow in our ministry.

I would like to suggest that each minister should arrange for himself a schedule of activities that he will follow as conscientiously as possible at least five days out of the week. This schedule should include time for personal devotions, reading of good books, studying of sermons, intercession for the needs of the church, and the necessary visiting which every pastor is required to do. It would be helpful to allot a certain amount of time for each activity. Be sure you do not eliminate an activity simply because

it is not as pleasing to you as some other task. Some pastors find it difficult to study; others shrink from pastoral visitation. The faithful minister will not avoid a task simply because it is unpleasant.

Someone has suggested that if a person cannot find time in a day to do all the things he ought to do, that he should wrap up his time in smaller packages. We may not have an hour to give to some special field of study, but we may have fifteen minutes a day to devote to it. Do you want to study German or Greek? Why not allot yourself fifteen minutes a day, five times a week. I knew of a man who learned French by using ten minutes a day as he rode to and from work on the bus. I have read that Alexander Maclaren wrote his famous *Expositions of the Scriptures* by dedicating one-half hour a day before breakfast to this task for several years.

Make a schedule for your day. Of course, it will be interrupted. Do not throw out your schedule simply because you cannot follow it every day. When your task is interrupted, instead of giving up your schedule, return to the task as soon as the interruption is over. Plan for your intellectual and spiritual growth. Secure worthwhile books and take time to read them. (Who can estimate the number of good books lying unread in ministers' libraries?)

Conquer the love of ease. Discipline yourself to get to your appointments in time. Take a warning from the proverb and do not fail to sow because a cloudy sky suggests rain.

The second danger is that of our physical appetites. Natural physical appetites in themselves are good. They formed a part of man's nature before

he fell into sin. Nevertheless, when physical appetites are permitted to go beyond their God-given bounds, they become sinful. Too much sleep makes a sluggard. Too much eating makes a glutton, and for a person to permit his sexual desires to dominate his life makes a sensualist, if not an immoral man.

Satan's delight is to tempt man so that God-given powers are used in a way not ordained of God. Satan takes the good thing that God has placed within us, he twists it, and it becomes a sinful thing used to destroy us. The secret of victory is not to try to eradicate these natural God-given impulses, but to consecrate them to Him. They must be brought to Christ, and Christ must be crowned Lord of all in our lives. We dare not acknowledge any other master in our inward lives than the Lord Jesus Christ. As we surrender our natural powers and appetites to Christ, He sanctifies them so that they contribute not to our destruction but to our edification and to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

G. Campbell Morgan points out that the Apostle Paul, in dealing with the limitations of Christian liberty, specifies three tests which we should apply to the matter of physical appetites. (See I Cor. 6:12; 10:23.)

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient," or literally, all things do not expedite; that is, they do not help me along in my Christian life. Second, "all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not"; that is, certain things may be lawful but they do not build up others. I must not cause my brother to stumble. Third, "all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under

the power of any"; that is, no appetite must be my master. Christ Jesus must reign supreme.

Christ taught grace. He just as certainly taught Christian discipline. He taught that we should be ruthless with anything that would interfere with God's claim upon our lives. "If thy right hand offend thee," He said, "cut it off." "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out." If we find ourselves grasping for things that are going to hinder us in Christian growth, cut off that grasping hand! If we find our feet taking us in directions contrary to the kingdom's way, stop! Pluck out the covetous eye! Don't look! This discipline is extended to legitimate things. We must leave houses and lands, fathers and mothers, children and wives, if necessary, for the kingdom's sake. Christ must be Lord of our lives. If not, we cannot be His disciples (cf. Luke 14:26-27, 33).

Chapter 7

GROWTH THROUGH CONFLICT

2. The Battle for the Mind

THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND is more strategic than the battle for the flesh, for no sin can become a physical act until it is first born in our thought life and consented to by our will. We become what we think.

The temptation to impurity in our thought life is the most insidious warfare employed in the strategy of Satan against the soldier of the cross. Victory is secured not so much by trying to banish or combat evil thoughts singlehandedly, but by turning to Jesus. Bring the problem to Christ. Uncover it in His presence and receive the grace of God, translating it into positive, creative action. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:21: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." We overcome evil thoughts and temptations most quickly when we turn our energies to positive action. It is a mistake to turn our thoughts inwardly, becoming occupied with our problem. We overcome evil with good. When we turn our eyes away from ourselves to Christ and begin to praise Him, the powers of darkness must loosen their hold upon our minds. It

is important to turn our energies to creative purposes. Rather than wrestle with unsanctified thoughts, it will help to visit a sick friend and encourage him, or write a letter to some soldier in the armed forces who may need encouragement. Prepare a message! Write an article! Plan an attack against Satan!

The battle for the mind includes the temptation to doubt. Every Christian is tempted to doubt in one form or another. This is as may be expected, since we are to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12). If there were no doubts to combat, there would be no fight of faith. With some, the doubt is likely to occur on an intellectual plane. Problems concerning the harmonizing of the statements of science with those of the Word of God may prove perplexing and distressing. Philosophic questionings may disturb the peace of mind and strike at the foundation of Christian faith. With others, the temptation to doubt may take another form. The temptation may be to think God has forgotten them; that God does not hear their prayers; that God is angry with them and will not forgive them for some sin which they have committed. In such conflicts, the mind often goes in circles, sometimes finding reason for hope in some argument or circumstance which is presented but later being cast again into the depths of despair. Whatever the type of mental conflict, whether the temptation is to impurity, doubt or discouragement, the way to triumph is the same. We must take our doubt and our discouragement to Christ. One moment in the presence of Christ does

more to resolve our problems than one year of argument on a merely human plane.

In my own experience when battle rages in the mind, I return time and time again to the one unshakable rock of our faith: Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The outcome of the conflict depends upon my answer to this great question: Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead or did He not? If He rose from the dead, He was the Son of God. If He rose from the dead, He lives today, triumphant and eternal. If He rose from the dead, He is Lord of all. I may not know the answer to my problems, but *He* knows the answer. His death on the cross proves His love for me. His resurrection proves His ability to save eternally. I may not understand or be able to give all the answers, but I can safely trust Him who died for me and who lives for me. Stilling my heart for a moment in the presence of the living Christ, I find a better and more satisfactory answer there than a thousand books could give to me. I know He lives and all is well!

A favorite saying is that discouragement is a favorite weapon of Satan. Doubtless this is true, and the weapon has been used effectively against many a giant in spiritual ministry. Even Moses and Elijah were not exempt.

It will be helpful when tempted to be discouraged to take a square look at the cause. Usually we will find that the discouragement does not stem from the fact that God has not been glorified in our lives and ministry, but rather because we are disappointed in ourselves. We thought better of ourselves than we have been able to produce. We expected more con-

sideration and understanding from friends or members of our congregation than we have received. Pride has been hurt and we allow ourselves to brood and lapse into discouragement. It will help us to realize that we seldom get the blues because souls were not saved or because God was not glorified. The things that discourage us are often not the important things. If we must, like Elijah, flee in our discouragement, let us also like him, go to "the mount of God." Take discouragement to Christ; that is the answer! Once He talks to our hearts, and our thoughts are turned away from ourselves to Him, discouragement will flee and hope will be reborn in our souls.

Chapter 8

GROWTH BY CONFLICT

3. *The Battle for the Spirit*

THE BATTLE FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT is the fiercest conflict of all. Since the spirit represents the highest part of the nature of man, that which is able to have contact with God, it would follow that the worse sins are not the sins of the flesh, but the sins of the spirit. I speak as a man in making this statement, since perhaps in God's sight there is no difference or category in degrees of sinning. The sins of the flesh are more easily seen and are generally condemned by Christian and unconverted alike, while the sins of the spirit are often condoned and sometimes actually praised by unconverted people.

Some have the mistaken idea that the human spirit is of necessity pure and cannot sin. In II Corinthians 7:1, we have the Apostle Paul's admonition: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all *filthiness of the flesh and spirit*, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Filthiness of the spirit includes such things as idolatry, witchcraft, rebellion, and, of course, the basic principle of all sin, pride. In fact, it is in the realm of the spirit that we come closest to understanding the origin of all sin. We understand that Satan rebelled against God and introduced sin into the uni-

verse when he was still one of the archangels of heaven. His grievous sin against God was committed in the realm of the spirit, for he had no fleshly body as we understand the term. Most students agree that Isaiah 14, where the account of the fall of Lucifer is found, describes the fall of Satan and the introduction of sin into the universe. Sin entered his heart when he said: "*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High*" (vv. 13-14; cf. Ezek. 28:13-19). Here we see the true nature of sin. God, the Creator, might be compared to the sun of our solar system, and all celestial beings, like the planets, were to find their orbit in worshiping and serving Him. The mystery of iniquity began to work when Lucifer permitted ambition and pride to come into his life. He desired to be the center, and to achieve his end he rebelled against God. It was this spirit of rebellion and self-glorification which he was able to instill in the heart of Eve when he said, "The day ye eat thereof . . . ye shall be as gods" (Gen. 3:5). Since then the fundamental characteristic of fallen man has been to make himself the center of his existence. Therefore, man is a rebel and unhappy, fighting against the very nature of things. Redemption corrects this. Jesus came and said: "I delight to do thy will, O my God. . . . My meat [source of strength] is to do the will of him that sent me" (Ps. 40:8; John 4:34). He brought redeemed man back into proper relationship with God. Satan still fights for the control of the spirit of man. In no area will the battle be fiercer, and in no

phase of life is man in so much danger of deceiving himself.

The servant of God must always be on the alert against the dominion of the spirit of pride. Neither the young nor the old is immune. A measure of success comes, and God's servant hears the subtle voice of the enemy saying, "Now you amount to something! You will be famous. You have attained success!" Such thoughts are extremely pleasant to the ear of the carnal man, and we all are in danger of believing these subtle lies.

We must also be on guard against the lure of ambition. There is a spiritual ambition which is pleasing to God. Ambition to grow in grace, love, and usefulness to God and man, is not only legitimate but should be our consuming passion. But ambition for position or office, ambition to advance for the sake of prestige or financial gain, is damning. This leads to jealousy and rivalry among brethren. Before we too quickly pass this by as not being applicable to our own case, let us ask ourselves honestly: Are we happy when our fellow minister is asked to fill a more important place than we do? Do we squirm when our neighbor is praised as an eloquent preacher? Do we resent our neighbor's success? Are we inclined to belittle his success, attributing it to "pull" or compromise? Do we secretly resent our friend's good fortune? All these things are indications that we are not free from carnal ambition.

Another sin of the spirit is hardness of heart. It is easy for a certain callousness to creep into our relationships. Are we as tender in our family rela-

tionships as we should be? Are we kind and forgiving? We must keep our home relations right. If not, a root of bitterness, springing up, will surely trouble us. Let the minister never go into the pulpit with hardness or bitterness in his own spirit.

Christian love must rule in our hearts in our relationship with our brethren. A hard and critical spirit will ruin us. Some ministers develop a chip-on-the-shoulder attitude. They complain that they "have never had a fair deal." Someone else "gets all the breaks," while they get the tough spots. They are bitter and complaining against the presiding officers of the church; they have nothing good to say about their fellow ministers in neighboring churches, and may carry the same attitude to the members of the official board of their local church. Occasionally there is a minister who goes from church to church, from pastorate to pastorate, leaving a trail of hard feelings, divided congregations and bitterness behind him. According to him, someone else is always to blame for the situation. He never sees that his own attitude is producing these results. Bitterness and hardness of spirit can wreck a man's ministry just as truly as sins of the flesh.

In this conflict between God and Satan, between light and darkness, between spirituality and carnality, in which the life of the minister becomes a focal point for the battle, we must day by day take our stand on God's side and against the weights and sins that so easily beset us, and "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Chapter 9

GROWTH IN LEADERSHIP

“FEED THE FLOCK OF GOD which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Peter 5:2-4).

The Apostle Peter addressed these words to those who had the oversight of the flock of God. The pastor here is a shepherd under Christ, the chief Shepherd. The church belongs to Christ, not to the minister, and the Lord Jesus, as Head of the whole church, commends a portion of the flock to the care of the minister. It is as though He would say, “These are My sheep. Shepherd them in My place. Take care of them for Me. Do it as I would do it.”

Oversight of the flock of God requires qualities of leadership in the minister—qualities which may be only imperfectly developed in the beginning. It is quite possible that when a minister first takes the responsibility of pastoring that he will make mistakes. He may not know how to feed the flock properly, and the flock may become weak and sickly. Perhaps the flock may not multiply under his care. This shows the necessity for the minister to mature

in leadership and develop those qualities that make him an able shepherd of the sheep.

Leadership requires that the minister go ahead and show the way. The illustration is of the Oriental shepherd who went before his flock leading them to pasture or to shelter. He did not drive nor, on the other hand, simply follow the sheep, but he led them.

Pastoral work requires both spiritual and administrative leadership. There is, first of all, leadership by example. The pastor should not simply tell the flock what they should do and where they should go, but should demonstrate to them by the example of his own life just what is expected of them. Usually the congregation learns more from our attitudes, our example and our conduct, than from listening to our sermons. We may have some very fine sermons on prayer, but if our own lives are prayerless, our sheep will follow the example of our lives rather than the exhortation of our preaching. We may be able to preach on the virtues of love and patience, but if we ourselves demonstrate self-assertiveness, vindictiveness and lack of self-control and, in times of stress, utter harsh words, it will be our example rather than our preaching which will exert the most influence on our flock.

The unguarded moment is more revealing of our true attitudes than is our studied presentation of the gospel on Sunday morning. What do we do when we are relaxing on a hunting trip with a group of men? What kind of stories do we tell? How careful are we to stay within the bounds of the laws of the land? How do we handle business matters? Do we

take advantage of others? Are we thoroughly Christian when we are not acting in the capacity of a professional minister of the gospel? These unguarded moments, these nonprofessional actions and attitudes, are where the true standards of our lives are revealed.

It is taken for granted that the reality of a pastor's call and ability will be manifested in his spiritual leadership. He should know where he is taking the flock and how to get there. It is not difficult to imagine the Oriental shepherd of sheep planning for the provision of his flock. "Today the flock will go to the mountainside for there has been rain and there should be fresh blades of green grass." Or, "It is going to be very hot today. I will take them to the valley and pasture the flock beside the cool, refreshing stream." Of course, the shepherd must know by firsthand knowledge the pasture lands to which he is to lead his flock. He must have experienced in his own life the reality of that which he preaches. Then he should know, better than anyone else, the type of special activity which the church needs. Is a revival needed? Is teaching required? Is it time for a special emphasis on prayer? Should there be an evangelistic campaign for the winning of the lost? The true pastor will have spiritual intuition about these needs. He should perceive such needs before any member of his congregation realizes them. He should not be a follower of the flock but a leader, and live close enough to God to find His mind for each step that is to be taken.

Since one of the principal activities and purposes of the church is to worship God in spirit and in truth,

the pastor would do well to develop his ability to lead the congregation in worship. This does not simply mean to direct a hymn of worship or to offer a prayer, although these may contribute. He should seek to develop the spiritual art of creating an atmosphere of worship in the services. Too often, the pastor is inclined to look upon the church service as a time when the congregation will listen to his preaching. Often the hymns and prayer are considered as mere preliminaries to the main event, the sermon. Let us remember that the spirit of praise and worship prepares the congregation to receive the Word of God, and that more may be accomplished in the few moments in which the congregation is in vital contact with God expressing praise, worship and adoration to the Lord of the church, than in an hour of instruction from the pulpit. To lead a congregation in worship, the pastor himself must cultivate the spirit of worship. Further, he must take time for unhurried waiting in the presence of God. The church needs to be brought back continually to the simplicity of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. The hymns and ritual of the service should never become an end in themselves. The believers must be brought into vital contact with God. The church today needs to learn again the simplicity of artless worship. The pastor's leadership in this matter will determine whether or not this becomes a common experience in the life of the church.

Spiritual leadership includes providing for the needs of the congregation. The faithful minister is one who gives "meat in due season" to his Lord's household. He must search out the type of spiritual

pasture that the flock needs. His preaching and teaching ought to provide a well-balanced diet. The pastor should endeavor to develop a ministry to the unconverted as well as to the church. Some have a tendency to emphasize one line of truth out of proportion to other truths. Some are "hard" preachers, emphasizing discipline and judgment. Their ministry to the church is almost entirely corrective. The church needs discipline, but it also needs messages of comfort and encouragement.

The pastor should endeavor to develop a teaching ministry, making the presentation of doctrinal truths part of his regular sermon material. Expositional preaching is greatly needed today. In preaching the doctrines of the Bible, let us be sure to develop all lines of scriptural truth. Avoid pet themes, such as continual treatment of prophetic subjects to the exclusion of other themes. Messages that show our responsibility to God and to the church, such as consecration, holiness of life, stewardship, witnessing, prayer, etc., should be intermingled with messages which present the grace of God to the believer, such as the atoning work of Christ, His resurrection, His priestly ministry, the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer—messages founded upon the promises of God to the Christian, which will encourage and build up his faith.

The church needs food, protection, comfort and exhortation. And to keep pace with the demands of the congregation, the pastor must grow in grace and be diligent in developing his own spiritual life.

Chapter 10

GROWTH IN LEADERSHIP (Cont'd)

Executive Leadership

THE PASTOR is not only a dispenser of spiritual truth, he is the recognized head of the congregation and administrator of the church's business with the task of promoting good will and cooperation among the members. This requires a considerable amount of executive ability.

In the business world, the realm of human relations is important. In a survey made of leading industries, it was found that two-thirds of the people who were dismissed from their employment lost their work because of their inability to get along with people. When a questionnaire was sent out to several leading industrial firms, inquiring as to what they looked for in an executive officer of their company, the reply of the vast majority placed as the No. 1 requisite, "ability to get along with people." If this is important in the commercial world, where companies deal with commodities that have dollar-and-cents value, how much more is it necessary in the work of the church, where we deal entirely with spiritual values and where the factor of human rela-

tions looms even more important than in the commercial world!

To grow in executive leadership, it is necessary for a man to study human nature. Let him study his people and let him study himself. Some ministers are unable to stay for any considerable length of time in a pastorate. They have the faculty of creating more problems than they solve. Trouble follows in their wake for they have not learned the essentials in good human relations. True Christianity makes for good human relations. We expect Christianity to improve family relations, to improve relationships between neighbors. What a contradiction of terms, then, if a pastor of a church does not know how to get along with the members of his church!

One of the first things a pastor must learn is that the people need individual attention. He must know his sheep—and they are not all alike. They have different personalities and different needs. Some are strong and stable, able to get along for the most part without much personal attention from their pastor. Others need appreciation and encouragement continually. The sheep and the lambs require different treatment. “Comfort the feebleminded” could be translated more accurately, “Comfort those who tend to become easily discouraged.” Some pastors feel that they cannot waste their time “playing nursemaid” to the emotionally immature “babies” in the congregation. However, God requires that the pastor take care of the lambs who need special attention. The pastor is shepherd of all the flock, not just that part of the flock with which he enjoys natural compatibility. He must learn to work with

Executive Leadership

all kinds of men. There will be leaders and followers in the congregation. Some surround themselves with the strong leaders in the congregation and are inclined to neglect the followers. Other ministers have the tendency to reject the strong leaders and surround themselves with the follower type. The pastor must learn to work with both types, with strong leaders and with the less aggressive followers.

This brings us to a source of trouble for some; that is, the tendency to show partiality and chum with those who particularly appeal to them personally, at the cost of neglecting other members. There is no quicker way to bring about discord in a congregation. The pastor must be gracious even to those who have opposed his ministry. If the pastor is aware that certain families have voted for him to be replaced, he must be big enough in spirit to be able to treat these families with kindness and give them particular attention. After all, it is no sin that someone may prefer another's ministry to our own! Some, however, have taken a shortsighted view and have looked upon such people as rebels and endeavored to remove them from places of influence in the church. Such an attitude shows the lack of spiritual development and maturity on the part of the pastor.

Special care is needed in establishing good relationships with the members of the official board of the church. It goes without saying, that if a pastor is to have a long and fruitful ministry in any church, he must be able to get along with the church's official representatives. Some pastors rather resent the idea of official boards and go so far as to make church officials a standing joke, to which they may

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refer publicly or in private conversation. That there have been many unhappy situations in relationships between pastors and the deacons of the church cannot be denied. But deacons do have a God-given place in the work of the church, and the pastor must not ignore them. Otherwise the minister may find himself in the unhappy situation of having to change pastorates every year or two.

There are a few common difficulties which a pastor meets in dealing with the official board of the church and which must be overcome. For one thing, the pastor may unconsciously be a bit afraid of his men. He may have heard from the preceding minister, or another source of information, that the board is a difficult one and that they have made trouble for other pastors. This may put the pastor on the defensive, so that he is reluctant to call in the men for consultation; and his attitude may not make for friendly relationships with the officials. Again, the pastor himself may not realize the importance of united action, and this may cause him to ignore the official board and endeavor to either settle things for himself, or bypass the official board and present matters directly to the congregation. He may unconsciously antagonize the board by showing a lack of confidence and friendliness. To some pastors the board is a necessary evil to be ignored when possible and to be tolerated when it cannot be ignored. This course is sure to produce discontent. The pastor needs to realize that he cannot work alone, even though he is an efficient minister. Church work is teamwork, and the successful pastor is one who inspires men to work with him. Some of the diffi-

culties between pastor and church board may arise because of a lack of a real understanding of the working relationship between the pastor, his board, and the church. I would suggest that early in his term of service, the pastor explain both to the church and to the board what is expected of them as far as he is concerned, and he should also have a frank talk with the board and find out what the board expects of him. Some boards will expect their pastor to take considerable initiative in certain matters and will feel that he is not a good executive if he fails to do so, while in other churches, the board may feel that a pastor who takes this same initiative is overstepping his prerogatives. Lack of clearly defined responsibilities makes misunderstandings almost inevitable.

Here are a few suggestions about establishing and maintaining good relationships:

1. Lay the foundation in understanding by defining what is expected of pastor and deacons.
2. Meet regularly with the official board. Make it a habit to meet with the board even when there is no emergency. Once a month is not too often, and in a larger church these sessions probably should be held more frequently.
3. Take the men into your confidence. Discuss the problems with them. Don't expect them to be "yes" men. Try to get all the members of the board to express their opinions on a subject. Let them feel that their opinion is appreciated. Be sure to discuss the problems with *all* the members of the board and not with just

one or two men of particular prominence among them.

4. Enlist the help of the official board. Try to give each man a task to do. Esteem the counsel which they give. Let each worker know how he is getting along, and commend him if he has done good work. Try to make the best use of each person's ability. Let the members of the board feel that as individuals they are important to you.
5. Issue specific instructions. Let each one know just what is expected of him. Reward good performance by recognition.
6. Try for unanimous decision on every major problem. Don't force an issue when you have a bare majority in favor of your plan. Rather, let the matter rest for a week or two. Get more information and take time for prayer and discussion. Every major action should have unanimous decision of the board if at all possible.
7. Assume responsibility for your own work and for those working with you. Don't "pass the buck." Don't blame someone else when things go wrong, even though you were not directly responsible.
8. Establish the custom of spiritual fellowship with the brethren. Pray with the official board and let them share the spiritual responsibilities with you.

The wise minister will plan to put the members of his congregation to work. He will not try to do everything himself, but he will encourage participa-

tion of all the members in some form of Christian service. "It is better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men."

Executive leadership requires planning for the future. The pastor is not to allow himself to be the victim of circumstances, but he is to plan the course of the church on a long-range basis. Our plans should not be made from Sunday to Sunday, but rather from year to year. A five-year plan for the growth and expansion of the church is not too long a range. Of course, the minister should be subject to the indication of the Spirit of God, who may from time to time indicate a special course of action.

Above all, to be a successful pastor, the minister must have a pastor's heart. This includes a spirit of sacrifice. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. This, too, demands a real love for the people. The Apostle Paul mentioned that though there are many instructors in Christ Jesus, "yet not many fathers." We will do nothing unless we really love the sheep. It is necessary for the minister to "gird himself with the towel" of humility and service in order to truly qualify as a spiritual leader. We come not to be ministered unto but to minister.

Chapter 11

GROWTH IN FAITH

AS I BRING THESE TALKS to ministers to a close, I would like to emphasize the importance of faith in our ministry. We will grow in true ministry as we grow in faith. While love is the measure of our Christian character, faith is the true measure of our success in ministry. In no other sphere of Christian life is the declaration more true, "According to your faith be it unto you."

A minister once came to Charles Spurgeon and asked him for the secret of his ministry. He said, "I preach the same Gospel you preach, and yet the unconverted do not accept Christ in my services as they do in yours. How is it that people accept Christ in every service when you preach?" It is said that Charles Spurgeon answered with a question, "You surely do not expect that people will be converted every time you preach, do you?"

"No, of course not!" was the reply.

"There you have it! Every time I preach I expect people to be converted."

Spurgeon ministered in faith, and God honored his faith.

Paul declared that faith is the true measure of our ministry. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to

think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, *according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*" (Rom. 12:3). He proceeds to apply this principle to the members of the body of Christ, each one having a different function or ministry. Notice that the measure of the minister is not his personality or vocabulary, but the measure of faith. He implies that if we judge ourselves by any other standard, we are likely to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Faith brings us into vital contact with God and makes the limitless power of the Almighty operative in our ministry.

In this connection, let us note Paul's declaration in Ephesians 3:20. He states that God is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us.*" That God's power is sufficient for all of our needs in life and ministry we cannot doubt. Its effectiveness, however, to us is limited "according to the power that worketh in us."

Again in Colossians 1:28, Paul explains the purpose of his ministry and in verse 29 he states: "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, *which worketh in me mightily.*" He was laboring according to the working of God which was working *in him mightily.*

By way of illustration, the dynamos of power in our city produce far more electricity than I individually can use. The supply at the powerhouse abundantly exceeds my personal needs. I receive in my house that abundant supply according to the wiring and the installations that I have placed in

my house. I may have thousands of watts at my disposal, but if I have placed only a twenty-five-watt electric bulb in the house, the light which I receive in my house will be of twenty-five-watt intensity, not according to the abundant supply of the powerhouse, but according to the installations which I have fixed in my dwelling. Similarly, in our spiritual life and ministry God can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think in our church and in our ministry. But to become effective, that abundant supply must have corresponding installations in our faith. If our faith calls for a thousand-watt illumination, to carry the figure further, we will draw on the source of power to the extent of a thousand watts. But if our faith is of the ten-watt variety, we will have the feeble results which our faith brings. God's power works in us according to the measure of our faith.

This is why prayer is so tremendously important in the life of the minister. We do not earn things from God by much prayer, but prayer is the means whereby our faith can become vitalized. It is not the many words or the long hours in prayer that count, but the intensity of our faith which is generated by our contact with God. One does not say, "If I pray one hour God will give me one soul, and if I pray five hours God will give me five souls," but, rather, prayer's service is to make our faith living and vital. Sometimes we may pray for days in order to reach the place of faith for a particular problem. Again, it may be a matter of minutes. It is the vitality of our faith that counts.

Remember the story of Praying Hyde? One time

he prayed until God gave him the assurance that he would be given one soul for every day in the ensuing year. The following year he prayed that this number might be increased to two souls for each day. He prayed until he had the assurance, and then went out to win those souls and God gave him the results he desired. He reached the point where he prayed for five souls for every day. God gave the results according to his faith.

The real question that confronts us is not how brilliant a sermon we can preach, but how is our faith?

There is a further scriptural basis for this truth. In John 15, Jesus compares us to branches in the true vine. He makes the flat statement "Without me ye can do nothing." On the other hand, He makes the declaration that if we abide in Him, we shall bear much fruit. Can we imagine a branch in the true vine remaining barren and sterile?

Again in Romans 12 and in I Corinthians 12 we are taught that Christ is the Head of the body and that we are members of that body. Can we imagine that God would place a member in the body and give it a task to perform without the vital life necessary for the carrying out of that task? The ministries of the Spirit imparted to God's servants are guarantees that God will supply the needed gift, ability and spiritual strength to carry out that task. God would not put a paralyzed member in His body. The question then is, Am I called to this work? Does God want me here? What does God want done here? I am His representative. He has called me. I will believe that He will give me the ability needed to the

carrying out of His purpose. God's callings are His enablings.

Never should a minister go into the pulpit to preach or lead a service simply because it is expected of him. We need to guard against professionalism in our ministry. We are not serving in the ministry to pass the time, or until we find something that suits us better. We must come to each service with the conviction that God has a plan for the service and a ministry for us to fulfill. We must minister in faith because according to our faith will it be done unto us. There is no greater truth in the matter of growth and ministry than this vital truth of believing God to work through us as members of His body.

This truth was made real to me several years ago while engaged in missionary work. Faced with the task of establishing a church in an unreached area, I found the demands upon me far more than my ability to meet. I was struggling with illness and my strength was limited. Worst of all, at this time I passed through a period of spiritual dryness. At least, I was confronted with a sense of spiritual inadequacy when confronted with such a task. There was a constant cry in my heart that God would grant His anointing and power. I longed to see greater results in my ministry. I thought of all the towns that should hear the gospel. I thought of the weak, struggling churches, and I could not help but realize that God must have something more than this. "Surely," I thought, "with such a tremendous need, God would desire to do more through me than He is presently doing. Surely He wants more than an occasional convert and some slight moving of

God's Spirit in His church." So the constant prayer of my heart was, "O God, give me more power!" The weeks lengthened into months, and a year rolled by with no appreciable change in the situation. I enjoyed a measure of the anointing of the Holy Spirit while ministering the Word and was conscious of being in the will of God, and yet, underneath it all, there was a deep dissatisfaction with my ministry and its results.

One day I attended a fellowship meeting in the country, which required travel by horseback. During the trip I became separated from my companions, and as I rode along on my horse I lifted my heart to God in prayer. As I was meditating on my own lack and realized that God's plan was for a fuller ministry, the Spirit spoke to my heart in the words of Scripture: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit)." The Spirit spoke to my heart and said, "Have you received the Spirit?" My answer was, "Yes, thank God, I know that the Holy Spirit came to abide. But, Lord, I want these rivers of power, these rivers of living water. I do not feel the flow of these rivers as I desire, nor do I see the results of them in my ministry." Again my attention was directed to the scripture "He that believeth on me." I said, "Lord, I do believe, but I am not experiencing these rivers." But again the scripture was repeated in my heart, "He that *believeth* . . . out of his belly *shall flow* rivers of living water."

It began to dawn on my soul. I spoke to the Lord.

“You mean, if I believe that Jesus gives the living water, if I look to Him as the source, regardless of the circumstances, regardless of how I personally feel, regardless of the results or apparent lack of results, that the rivers are flowing?”

I turned the scripture over in my mind again. I could draw no other conclusion. So I said, “Lord, if this is the case, then regardless of how dry I feel, how difficult it is for me to speak; even though the words seem to lodge in my throat when I address a congregation, I am going to believe that the rivers of living water are flowing. I am going to believe that I am not defeated, ineffectual, without fruit. Rather, I am going to believe that the Holy Spirit is using me, and is producing in the congregation results for which I believe.” A very simple thought, and yet it was the voice of God to me and it solved that problem which I was facing in my ministry.

This, then, is my final word: “According to your faith be it unto you.” “According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” When we are in God’s service, we do not need to depend simply upon human ability and be defeated by the trend of natural circumstances. We are God’s men, in God’s place, doing God’s work. If we believe, victory inevitably will be ours. It will not always come in the way we expect it to come. God will not necessarily use our voice and our leadership to bring about the answer to our desire, but the answer will come as we believe God. Let us remember that we are members of His body and, according to the measure of our faith, He will work

through us and others to the accomplishing of His divine purposes in the world and in His church. Let us say with Paul, "Sirs, I believe God," and step out expecting that He who has sent us will work with us "with signs following."

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A CHRISTIAN FORUM BOOK

GROW TOWARD LEADERSHIP

by Melvin Hodges

Effective leadership is a growing process. More than a simple outline of qualifications, *Grow Toward Leadership* is a handbook of the possibilities, goals, necessity and methods of this growing process needed to produce true leadership potential.

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MELVIN HODGES is Field Secretary for Latin America, Foreign Missions Department, the Assemblies of God, serving in this position since 1954. Previous to that he spent 19 years on the mission field and two years as editor of *Missionary Challenge* magazine. Other books by Mr. Hodges include *The Indigenous Church*, *On the Mission Field* and *Build My Church*.

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